

Interview with Everett Drumright

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR EVERETT DRUMRIGHT

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Q: Ambassador Drumright has had wide diplomatic experience in China going back to 1932 and culminating in assignment as United States Ambassador to Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China, from 1958 to 1962. Ambassador Drumright, to lend perspective to the discussion of your experiences in China, would you please start by telling us a little about your early diplomatic assignments in China—that was well before World War II, I believe—and about how you got involved in the Foreign Service in the first place?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes. I was graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in business administration in 1929. After graduation I returned to my home where, for a few months, I did some work for my father, who was in business. Then, you may recall, that the Great Depression came upon us and the chances of getting a job were greatly diminished.

I considered going to Stanford University for further study in business administration and, in fact, in February of 1930 I even went out there to look into it. But I decided that I didn't want to pursue that, so I came back to my home. And one day, by chance, I happened upon a friend, a young lawyer, in my town. The town is Drumright, Oklahoma, by the way.

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Q: That's very co-incidental.

DRUMRIGHT: And this friend told me that he was preparing to take the examination for the Foreign Service. And I said, "What is that all about?" So he proceeded to tell me what he knew about the Foreign Service and gave me the booklet he had received from the State Department, which I read with considerable interest. After giving the matter some thought, I decided that I would take a fling at it.

So in order to get in for the next examination, which came, as I recall, about the 1st of September of 1930, I had to scrape around and get some recommendations. And since I didn't have some of the papers to fill out, I had to take my car and drive to Washington. I reached Washington, filled out the papers, and handed them in at the State Department. That was my first introduction to the State Department.

I returned to my home then. I think about June, this friend and I decided to take the examination in Denver, where the climate was good, rather than in St. Louis, where we knew it would be hot. So we decided to go in advance to the University of Colorado and study for the exam in the University of Colorado Library. We accordingly did so, spending about six weeks, every day, in the library going over the examination questions which we had provided for us from previous examinations.

Following that, I believe in early September, we proceeded to Denver where we had two days of written examinations. After that we returned home and, in due course, I received word that I had a passing grade of 80. Whereupon, I applied for the oral exam, which was given in November. I duly went to Washington and took the oral exam before Wilbur Carr and several others who were prominent in the Foreign Service.

Q: Yes. I remember the names.

DRUMRIGHT: And waited for the results. The results were not too long in coming. I think about Christmastime I received a letter from the State Department asserting that

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I had passed the exam and that I was being assigned in a probationary way to Ciudad Ju#rez, Mexico. I took the Oath of Office, as I recall it, about the second of January, 1931. I proceeded then to Ciudad Ju#rez, where the Consul, William P. Blocker, told me he had not yet had word from the State Department that I was assigned, but he would take me at my word. Whereupon, he assigned me a desk. I spent the months from January to September of 1931 at Ju#rez, where I was given a well-rounded experience in the various parts of the Foreign Service work there.

In September I was assigned back to Washington to take the Foreign Service School course. There I met with about 12 or 14 of my Foreign Service colleagues and we were put through the typical three-month course, from accounting, to immigration, to reporting, political and economic. On the conclusion of the school, which, by the way, was run by James Stewart, I received word that I was being assigned to Hangzhou, China. Whereupon, I said, "Where is that?"

Q: Yes. Now we have China working, anyhow.

DRUMRIGHT: That, in a word, is how I got associated with China.

Q: May I interject there? I note that you were specialized during your Foreign Service career, then, after that, almost entirely in the Far East. How did that come about? I mean, at your personal wishes, or did the Department take a hand and feel that you should remain in that field?

DRUMRIGHT: To continue, I proceeded to Hangzhou. I might interject here that I received a rough reception upon entering China in that there was a very considerable war going on in Shanghai, where I landed, at the time. The Japanese, who had taken Manchuria in September of 1931, when we were at the Foreign Service School, had, again, attacked the Chinese in the Shanghai area.

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I recalled we had to wait down at the mouth of the Yangtze River for some time before we were allowed to proceed. And it was very fortunate that we were allowed to go into Shanghai at all. While there, I had to stay about two weeks awaiting transport to Hangzhou by ship. And I do recall, while in Shanghai, meeting George V. Allen. In fact, I put up with him at his flat in the consular building while I was waiting to proceed on up river to Hangzhou.

After about two weeks, I did proceed to Hangzhou by a river boat. And I do recall that that river boat was iron-sided. And I asked the captain why. He said, "Why, we're shot at from time to time by these communist bandits that roam along the river banks so we have to protect ourselves." Well, fortunately, in my case, there didn't appear to be any shooting and so we arrived safely in Hangzhou.

I had a pleasant several months there under the tutorship of Walter A. Adams, Consul General. And while I was there, I think it was about August of 1932, I received a telegram from Washington inviting me to go to Peking to take the two year language course in Chinese. I thought about it. I talked it over with Lewis Clark, a language officer, and Oliver Edmund Clubb, another language officer, and also the consul general, who, by the way, recommended against it.

But in the long run, I had found the China that I had gotten to know by that time, after traveling to Sichuan and Hunan, and after meeting some Chinese in Hangzhou, to be charming. I found the Chinese to be an interesting and enjoyable people. And, on that basis, I decided I would, perhaps, try to make China my career. Whereupon, I accepted the invitation and proceeded to Peking where I started my language training, I believe on October the 1st, 1932.

I found the study of the Chinese language to be incredibly difficult, but I stayed with it. I worked very hard at it. In fact, one time I was ordered by doctors to leave for a month

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because of my health. But I came back and, in due course, finished the language. Whereupon, I was assigned to Shanghai.

I proceeded to Shanghai in December of 1934 and was assigned to what we call the land office, which took care of Chinese affairs, and which also took care of the deeds of Americans who had property in the international settlement there at the time. And we also had the protection work, which was not inconsiderable in the land office. I worked there under Edmund S. Cunningham, an old line consular officer.

And while I was there, I recall having one rather interesting event occur. And that was that I was sent to Swatow in Guangdong Province in Southern China to endeavor to obtain a release of a Catholic priest who had been kidnapped by Chinese bandits up in the mountains of Guangdong. I did go to Guangdong. And I went up river and I went as near as I could to where the priest was said to be held. And I worked there with the officials and the like, and made some investigation, and started staying put there. Whereupon, one day, I think after about three weeks, I got word that the priest had been released, not to me, but to the consulate general in Canton.

My work in Shanghai did not involve a great deal of politics or economics at that time. Clarence E. Gauss succeeded Edwin S. Cunningham in 1935, in late 1935 I think it was. And then I was put in political work there. I was there at the time of the so-called Sian Incident when Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped by the Northeast General Chang Hsueh-liang. I recall we had some very interesting times endeavoring to obtain information about this kidnapping.

It made a very interesting story with almost no information coming out of Sian that we could obtain, nor could the embassy seem to obtain very much. We did make contact with an advisor to the Northeastern General Chang Hsueh-liang, and did get some information that threw a little light on the kidnapping. But the kidnapping was over, I believe, on December the 26th of 1936.

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Details were slow in coming out about it. And probably some items about that kidnapping have never been made public to this day. But it suffices to say, Chang Hsueh-liang, who had been sent to Northern China to launch a campaign to subdue the Chinese communists who were situated to the north, never took any action. And it was then that Chiang Kai-shek had gone there to investigate this situation. He had gone there himself and then, while he was there, he was kidnapped. It seemed that there may have been some influence on Chang Hsueh-liang from the Chinese communist who, evidently, were in some kind of contact with him.

And it also seems, by hindsight, that the Soviet Russians were involved in that they recommended to the Chinese communists, and probably to Chang Hsueh-liang, that it would be best if Chiang Kai-shek were released. Why? Because the Soviet Russians were very concerned about Japan and the possibility of Japan attacking their eastern borders in Siberia. And they wanted another opponent and the logical opponent was China. Well, that was perhaps the most interesting event that occurred during my assignment to Shanghai.

Then, about March 1937, I received instructions to proceed again to Hangzhou. I did so and I was doing political reporting up there. I should mention that, when I went there in 1932, banditry, guerilla activity, communist activity, was rife all around that area. But by the time I returned there in 1937 it was quiet. Chiang had actually gone there himself in 1932 and had launched what he called a bandit suppression campaign against the communists, which drove them away from that central China area and enabled the communications between there and Shanghai and on west to Western China to be opened up freely.

I was engaged in some political and economic reporting then at Hangzhou when, on July 7, 1937, we had the so-called Liuko Chiao (Marco Polo bridge) incident happened near Peking where Japanese military forces attacked the Chinese. That was significant because, rather than being another common, ordinary incident in the annals of Chinese-

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Japanese affairs, it became the starting point of an eight year war of resistance by the Chinese. That was the main thing in China from 1937 to 1945.

It was not long after the war started that the Japanese also attacked Shanghai in a very large way and started bombing up as far as Hangzhou. I recall that we had several bombing attacks on the airport, which was just at the outskirts of Hangzhou. Of course, with the war going full blast and with the Chinese determined to fight a defensive war rather than surrender, we had to think about evacuating, perhaps, some thousand missionaries who lived in the back country of Western, Northwestern, and Southwestern China, which came within our purview at the Hangzhou Consulate General. I recall we were very busy by the end of July writing letters to our constituents throughout that whole area urging them, unless they had very essential business there, to evacuate or make preparations to do so in case the situation worsened.

Of course, as time went on, the situation did worsen. The Japanese took Shanghai after two months of very intensive fighting and then commenced their offensive toward Nanking, which is about 200 miles west of Shanghai. Again, Chiang Kai-shek threw his very best forces into the fight trying to stop this Japanese offensive. But the Japanese had too much power, and their equipment, their tanks, their artillery, and their very well trained forces, to put up a successful resistance. And so gradually the Chinese were forced back. And it was along about December 10 that they reached the outskirts of Nanking.

That meant that our embassy had to be evacuated and our Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson and part of his staff came up river to Hangzhou and set up shop in our consulate general. In the meantime, the remainder of the staff, except for one or two, had taken to the U.S.S. Panay, a Yangtze River gun boat of ours, and were moving up stream on about December 12 when that ship was bombed by the Japanese, although they had advanced word that the ship was there and that it was an American ship with official personnel on board. Well, the ship was bombed anyway and it sank, but all personnel managed to get off. We had some injured but, eventually, they were enabled by help from the Chinese to

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make their way to Hangzhou. That, of course, was another stirring event in the history of the times.

The war went on, with the Japanese gradually advancing. And I should say here that, along about February of 1938, they did make some advances to the Chinese to settle the war on what might have been regarded as somewhat advantageous terms to a country that was being beaten. But Chiang Kai-shek refused it flat out and said he was going to continue the war. And that, you might say, set the policy for the next seven years. So the war went on with the Japanese.

They had taken Canton about the same time they had taken Nanking. No, I'm sorry. It was later. They took Canton later in 1938. And they advanced on the central front up the Yangtze Valley toward Hangzhou. And, eventually, in August, the Chinese Government decided to move its temporary capital again, this time from Hangzhou to Chungking in Southwestern Sichuan Province.

They duly made the move with the result that our embassy, then a small group composed of Ambassador Johnson, and Counselor Willis Peck, and three or four other junior secretaries, boarded the U.S.S. Luzanne, the flagship of the US Yangtze fleet, and proceeded to Chungking. I recall that we arrived there about the 8th of August. We had no place to go, no place to sleep, no nothing. But within a short time we arranged with the Standard Vacuum Oil Company to lease one of their warehouses on the south bank of the Yangtze River and set up our embassy with radio communications with Washington.

And we were able to rent some housing from the British Oil Company that had an extensive compound in Chungking and wasn't using much of it. So the ambassador and some of the other personnel arranged housing. I arranged housing up in the hills behind the river from the Standard Vacuum Oil Company. So we began to settle down and establish ourselves in Chungking. It was a difficult situation. Chungking was a backwards

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city which had come under government control only a few years before that. And there was a period of some months of settling in there.

Meantime, Hangzhou was lost in October of 1938, and Canton about the same time. That meant that China no longer had any access to the China seaboard. It had lost all the richest and most industrial part of China and the ports to the Japanese. That meant that China had to rely on the back door through Indochina and Burma for assistance from abroad. I would say that the United States, during the first year or two of the war, complained, of course, to the Japanese about their attack on China but did little else. It was more or less a repeat of what had happened in 1931 when the Japanese had taken Manchuria.

But about the time we went to Chungking or a little after, the US Government began to take an added interest in the future of China. And I recall that in 1939 our relations became closer and we began to give them some financial assistance. Meantime, our relations with Japan began to worsen as we put on an embargo against some of these metals and things that they had been importing from us for use in their war efforts.

By 1940, with the Japanese advance then stalled more or less. I would say during the years 1940 and 1941 we had some intense bombing of Chungking by the Japanese. They bombed the city on many occasions and very indiscriminately. I am convinced that the purpose of the bombing was to try to intimidate the Chinese into surrender or the making of some kind of a peaceful settlement. But it didn't work. Mind you, there were well over a million people living in Chungking. And the end result of all this bombing was that the Chinese, within a few months, built a large underground system where that million people could congregate in safety during those indiscriminate raids.

Other than that, I would say the war went along more or less in a desultory way. With the Chinese, of course, becoming weaker and weaker in that they could not receive any

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help but financial help from abroad because of the distances from the seacoast, and with inflation beginning to heat up vigorously.

I recall that early in 1941 back in Washington we were beginning to take a much deeper interest in China and Roosevelt sent one of his advisors, a fellow named Lauchlin Currie, who, by the way, later turned out to have some communist connection. They sent him out to China to advise the Chinese on their inflation problem. Well, ironically, Currie made a suggestion that the Chinese did accept. And that was that China set in motion immediately a tax plan in kind. In other words, they set up a system of taxing the farmers, who were really about the only productive element in the area under the government's control, to pay a good part of their taxes in kind. After it was set in motion in 1941, this plan helped to curb the inflation problem to a considerable extent.

Toward the end of 1941 an American volunteer group began to become active under General Claire Chennault, with the result that the Japanese air attacks in Western China were curbed. That was an important element there. I might say in regard to 1941, that in April, Nelson T. Johnson, who had been Minister and Ambassador to China from 1929 to 1941, was reassigned to exchange places with Clarence E. Gauss. In other words, Johnson went to Australia as minister and Gauss came to Chungking as ambassador. It was a point of considerable change as far as China was concerned.

Nelson Johnson had always been sympathetic to the Chinese effort and had appreciated all that the Chinese had done under the most difficult circumstances to carry out the war against Japan. Clarence Gauss came in with the idea, it seemed, that the cause was lost in China and he had very little interest in doing anything about it. Nevertheless, the United States did continue to make some financial assistance available to China. That was about all we could do, other than help them build the Burma Road and try to ship in some supplies that way. Of course, that proved to be largely a failure because of the distances and the difficulties of the road.

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Late in 1941 I had orders to proceed back to Shanghai, which I had left in 1937. I flew to Hong Kong and spent a few days there. I arranged to get a ship to Shanghai. As it turned out, it was the last commercial ship to make the trip from Hong Kong to Shanghai because the British had premonitions that something was going to happen and they ordered their shipping back. In the case of my ship, the radio word was not received and we proceeded on into Shanghai. I arrived December 2, 1941.

The war started early in the morning of December 8th for us. I was sleeping peacefully in the Cathay Hotel on the Bund when I heard the opening cannon shots which were directed from the Japanese concession to the American and British gunboats which were anchored down river about a mile from the Japanese settlement. Well, that bespoke the opening of the Pacific War as far as we were concerned.

I went over to the consulate and we burned our papers and were ordered to go into internment in a hotel across the street from the consulate at noon of December 8th. We did so and we were then interned under Consul General Frank Lockhart and his Deputy, Edwin Stanton, until the end of June of 1942, when, with the help of the Swiss and negotiations undertaken through them with the Japanese, there was a swap of diplomats. We and our diplomats in Japan proceeded by ship then to Lourenço Marques, in Portuguese East Africa, where there was an exchange of diplomats.

Q: Ambassador Drumright, what was your personal feeling toward the host government after you were interned? Did you still have the same viewpoint on the ability of the Chinese to make a good accounting of themselves in this war?

DRUMRIGHT: I felt when I left Chungking that they could manage to stall out the war. China is a tremendous country and it would take millions of Japanese to overrun the whole country, if there was someone deciding to put up opposition. Chiang Kai-shek was a very determined man. I knew him personally. I had met with him quite a few times. And there

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was no doubt in my mind that he would continue to prosecute the war as long as it was possible at all.

Mind you, he also had to contend with the Chinese communists. They were utilizing this war—this was an important matter, too—to build up their forces, to build up their strength in Northwest China. From the start of the Japanese War Chiang Kai-shek could no longer divert any attention to them up there, so they had a pretty free hand in parts of Northwest China and North China where they very cleverly penetrated behind the Japanese lines and began to build up their forces. In 1938 they were supposed to have reached an agreement to fight the war together, but there was virtually no effort on their part thereafter to do anything to forward the war against Japan. They were 100 percent bent on building up their own forces, of course.

I was not one who was defeatist about it, no. In that way I differed from our ambassador in Chungking. And I still felt that way when we returned to Washington in August of 1942. I was assigned some work there. I helped arrange a treaty whereby we gave up our extraterritorial rights in China. We had had those rights since 1840. And we decided as a gesture, at least at that time, to rescind those rights. And I also wrote some reports on conditions in occupied China when I was there.

I was then reassigned to China. I was told that we were opening some one-man posts in the interior of the country; namely, places like Chengdu, northwest of Chungking, and Sian in Northwest China, and Luichow, further in Northwest China, and even Dawai or Urumqi in Sinkiang, and I believe, also, Kueiin in Southwest China.

Q: Did you identify with the old China hands, as they were called in some places in those days?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I might have been considered an old China hand, in a sense, since I went there in 1932 and here it was 1943, 11 years. By that time I had been living there most all those years. Yes, in a sense, although I was not the old China hand of the treaty

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ports, which largely meant the business types and the missionaries, also, if you want to call them old China hands. People who lived out there for 20, 30 years, yes.

Q: I ran into many of them in London, where I was in the early 1940's.

DRUMRIGHT: In when?

Q: In London in the early 40's.

DRUMRIGHT: In the early 40's? Well, I went there in 1946, myself. I'll tell you about that later.

Q: Sure.

DRUMRIGHT: Anyway, I returned to West China in January of 1943. And I was asked by Ambassador Gauss which post I wanted. And I chose, at that time, Chengdu, where we were about to build a big airport to bomb Japan. I spent a few months in Chengdu, which was on the quiet side. Whereafter, I was told there was an opening in Sian if I wished to go there. I wrote back and said I did like the idea of going to Sian.

So I went up there about May of 1943. I took up my abode there and spent the next 13 or 14 months in the Sian area. Now, Sian was the most advanced area toward the Japanese occupied areas and also the Chinese communists to the North. So it was a place of considerable importance, although we had never had anyone there before. I was busy there reporting, both on the Japanese in the occupied areas, and, as much as I could get, on the Chinese communists about 100 miles north of Sian where they had their headquarters in Yen'an.

During that time I made a long trip to the area east of Sian to look into the situation and investigate our missionaries and that sort of thing. I suppose I spent three weeks or so, including bicycling throughout Hunan Province in central China, and going over as far as the town where exchanges took place between Japanese occupied China and Chiang

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Kai-shek's China. There was a town there where they exchanged people and goods. It was a rather interesting little town where you could see a great deal of activity going on all the time. I was curious to see this town and I did so. And I wrote a report to the State Department about it later.

One of my main activities in the Sian area was to evacuate American missionaries who had remained there after 1937, and had done so safely until about April of 1944 when the Japanese launched an attack south to open up their corridor there from north to south, between Peking and Hangzhou. We, fortunately, had a couple weeks word that something was in the wind so I was able to contact our missionaries, mostly by letter, who were over in those areas and to urge them to move out. And virtually all of them did so. I recall arranging for their evacuation to Chungking by special trains and by buses. It turned out to be a successful evacuation.

In about August of 1944 I was instructed to return to Chungking. I spent about three months there in the embassy doing some political reporting. And during this time we had the changeover from General Stilwell to General Albert Wedemeyer. That is to say, Wedemeyer took over the command of American forces, such as they were, as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo. The selection of General Stilwell had been an unfortunate one. He had never managed to see eye to eye with the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. And finally, the Generalissimo felt obliged to ask for his recall. It was then that General Wedemeyer came and took over. I would say the atmosphere improved tremendously at once.

Q: Fortunately, I'm old enough to remember all those names from the World War II press of those days.

DRUMRIGHT: In the meantime, President Roosevelt had sent General Pat Hurley as his special representative to look in on the situation out there in West China. I have a feeling that his recommendation had something to do with the replacement of General Stilwell.

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And shortly thereafter word came that General Hurley would replace Ambassador Gauss as ambassador. I recall that occurring about mid-November, at which time I was called back to Washington. As a matter of fact, Ambassador Gauss and I left about the same time.

Now the situation out there had worsened by that time because the Japanese had conducted this further offensive in Central China that I mentioned before. And they also had advanced to Gualin in South China, and were threatening to advance on Hunan, on Kweilin. But that proved to be a bit too much for them. I think Wedemeyer and the Generalissimo working together threw more forces into the action down there and slowed that advance so that it was not effective.

The situation in China was almost verging on the desperate. Many people, including Ambassador Gauss, thought the Chinese had no chance of holding out. And other people, like Theodore White, the writer, were of that mind. Some of my colleagues in the Foreign Service thought we would do better to work with the Chinese communists whose power had advanced very considerably, as I mentioned before. So that was the situation, in a few words, when I left in November of 1944.

I reported in to the Department at the beginning of 1945. And I recall one of my first jobs was to write a paper on the potential for some kind of a settlement in China between the government and the communists. I did submit a paper. I think a few people have looked at it since but I think things turned over a little too rapidly.

Anyway, the war was over in Europe during the spring of 1945. And President Roosevelt died and President Truman came in. I was in Washington when that all occurred, that melancholy era. In the meantime, things continued to worsen in China. The situation continued. Vice President Wallace was sent out there to check into the situation and submitted a report. That's just in passing. It became a question, then, in Washington as to what to do. And about that time the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and

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the second one on Nagasaki. And the war in Asia came to a conclusion in August. Whereupon, the situation in China became more and more acute, what to do, how to solve the situation.

Well, at the beginning we helped Chiang Kai-shek and his forces recover the occupied areas of China. General Wedemeyer was very instrumental in that activity on the military side. Then there came a recall of Pat Hurley and his going before the Congress. Perhaps you might remember that?

Q: Yes, I do.

DRUMRIGHT: Anyway, there was the big hoopla about China and should we continue to assist the government, our ally, as we had in the past, or should we try to do something to work a compromise between the government and the communists. And this became a big issue after the surrender of Japan and the return of the Chinese government to East China.

Then, there came along the question of Manchuria. As you recall, there had been the Yalta Agreement which had, unfortunately in my view, returned the Russian rights to all they had given up before in Manchuria and Mongolia. And that meant the Russians had moved in. In fact, they moved into Manchuria a few days before they surrendered Japan and made an effective seizure of Manchuria, which under treaty was to go back to the Chinese Government. Well, we made a few stabs at helping the government, but they came to nought.

The Chinese Government actually made a big mistake, and this is, perhaps, hindsight, in sending their main forces into Manchuria to try to seize it from the Chinese communists, who were being put in place there by the Soviet Russians, and handed over all the Japanese military equipment that had been left there. This did not succeed with the result

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that the Chinese suffered some serious military defeats there. This lead, eventually, to their being driven off the Mainland.

Our help had been desultory, to say the least. Perhaps it was more difficult than we certainly wanted to get into. The question then came to what to do about it. And that resulted in the sending of the Marshall Mission to China at the end of 1945. Now I was on the China Desk at the time and I took the position that trying to work out a compromise between those two groups was futile. It would not work and it would probably redound to the disadvantage of the government. My position was that we should assist the government in reclaiming all of occupied China, including Manchuria. But we chose to send the Marshall Mission out with the objective of getting a settlement between the Chinese Government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese communists.

General Marshall worked hard on that for about a year out there. And in the interim, after meeting Leighton Stuart—who was a university president and a real old China hand out there, he'd been born there and then brought up in China, and then educated in the United States and had gone back to China, and was head of the university in the Peking Area—General Marshall met him and was charmed by Stuart. We had not had an ambassador out there during that critical time. You might say Marshall was ipso facto the ambassador. We had not appointed one after the departure of Pat Hurley. Marshall had been very much impressed with Stuart, and his background, and his talk about China. And he, therefore, recommended that Stuart be appointed ambassador. And that was done. I remember carrying some of the papers around the State Department that accomplished this appointment. It was probably a good assignment.

And Stuart went to Nanking, took over the embassy. And there he worked with Marshall. And as I said, they worked hard to try to achieve a settlement. I think Stuart, in his own mind, felt that it was not very likely that one could be achieved, but he went along with it. But it failed. Early in 1947 Marshall issued a statement of a “plague on both your houses,” and came back to the US. And later, not long later, he was appointed Secretary of State.

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Q: During this period, Mr. Ambassador, were the Chiang Kai-shek forces still on the Mainland?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes. Our help had diminished to nothing. It started diminishing in 1946. I'd say the beginning of 1947 when they sent Marshall out there would be no more help. Because if you gave help that would blast the negotiations for a settlement. It couldn't be done anyway. So there was no help. And as time went on we withdrew our help almost completely. So in 1947 Marshall left China but left Stuart there to be the ambassador and came back. And there was no further help from us to the Chinese Government which had fought this long, hard, eight-year war, and had not received very much help other than — [End Tape I, side 2. Begin Tape 2, side 1.]

DRUMRIGHT: As I said, we withdrew our support of China except in terms of hoping and trying to work out a compromise between the communists and the government. But it was to no avail.

Meantime, I was reassigned in October of 1946 to London. I was there until about March of 1948 and my job was to cover the Far Eastern area. Most of our work at that time related to British problems, getting out of Southeast Asia, and that sort of thing. Otherwise, there wasn't very much in terms of China and the like.

And then I was reassigned in March of 1948 to Japan where I was to be the deputy to Bill Sebald, who was the political advisor to General MacArthur. I proceeded to Japan, arriving there in June, I think it was. I did have the honor to meet General MacArthur in his office one day and had a pleasant chat with him.

Q: Great.

DRUMRIGHT: But my assignment was cut very short. Within one month I was ordered to go to Seoul, Korea, to set up the mission that had to come in being with the establishment of a Korean Government, the South Korean Government, which was to take place on

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August 15, 1948. I did proceed to Korea, where I relieved Joseph E. Jacobs and was something of a one man post there for a few weeks until Ambassador Muccio, who did not have the title at that time, came out. He was personal representative of the President. Whereupon, we started establishing our mission in Korea.

We had a rebellion, I recall, not too long after the government was set up by President Syngman Rhee. As I said, the government came into being August 15, and he became the President. We had a very good rapport with the old gentleman, who had been a revolutionary from his youth. He had been booted out of Korea by the Japanese because of his revolutionary ideas and had lived mostly in the United States up until the time he returned.

So we had the job of helping reestablish a Korean Government in Korea after almost 50 years of Japanese rule, and of helping the Korean Government to get on its feet economically, as well as politically. That was a pretty good size job, but we were well on our way. There was this uprising at the south end of Korea by some militarists who turned out to be communists. But that was put down and, after that time, the communists had a very difficult time, indeed, trying to penetrate Korea. The remainder of their guerrillas were done away with within one year of the Korean Government coming into power. So we helped them with their political and their military establishment.

In 1948 only two divisions of troops were left in Korea. But, over our objections at the embassy, they were recalled in the middle of 1949. This was a period when the American feeling was bring the boys home. We had been in the war, and suffered from it, and we were wanting to call it all quits. So those forces were among the last, I think, be repatriated, other than those that were being kept in Germany, and Japan, and a few other countries. So, over our objections, they were repatriated and left was a 500-man military advisory group, which did a good job. They helped the South Korean military to organize and form up.

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In the meantime, we were trying to get that Korean Army, which really amounted to less than 100,000, some adequate military equipment. We never did succeed very well. The position in Washington was that we didn't want to build up South Korea because they might want to try to move over and take over North Korea. Which was, of course, laughable because the North Koreans had far more military power than the South Koreans, aided and abetted as they were by the Soviet Russians. So we were not successful in holding at least, say, a division, which might have kept the North from attacking. And we were not able to adequately arm the army that was being put into existence in South Korea.

We did have a fairly ongoing economic program beginning to start and Koreans beginning to go into business and build up.

Q: Were we assisting the South Koreans economically at that point?

DRUMRIGHT: We have a hundred million dollar economic aid program, yes. We had a hundred million military. So the total was a program of about two hundred million. Not a small program but not adequate in the military sense, considering the North Koreans being up there only 50 miles away with an ongoing buildup of military power that was pretty awesome. And we didn't know too much about it, by the way, but we knew something.

Well, we thought things were then moving along rather satisfactorily, except for the North Korean threats and General MacArthur who had pulled out at the time of the surrender had nothing to do with us in Korea. It was right, it was our job, it wasn't his.

So then came the invasion. That occurred early in the morning of June the 25th of 1950. I was awakened on that misty Sunday morning by our military attaché who informed me that there was heavy fighting going on up on the border.

Q: What were your responsibilities in the embassy in those days?

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DRUMRIGHT: I was the deputy to Ambassador Muccio. I was the consular, the title they gave us at that time. And, of course, we'd had incursions on quite a few occasions, back and forth stabs across the line. So I wasn't taking that one report all too seriously. I asked the my aide to continue to follow that closely and to keep us informed. Well, he called back within an hour, I'd say about 7 o'clock, and reported that the action was continuing in building up and was extending all along the 38th parallel. Well, that meant something serious.

Q: Sure.

DRUMRIGHT: So I rang up Ambassador Muccio. I'd say by that time it was getting on toward 8 o'clock. His boy told me he had left word not to be disturbed, he'd been out somewhere the night before. But that was all right. I said, "Well, don't mind that. You go and get him out of bed. I want to talk to him urgently." So he got him and I said, "John, we're in trouble. We have an invasion here all along the 38th parallel." He was calm about it. He said, "Okay, let's go to the office and get going here."

So we met at the office and continued to assess the situation for an hour or so. We called our people in—this was Sunday, it was not a working day. Well, it was quite evident by 9 o'clock that it was an invasion so Ambassador Muccio told me to draft a telegram to Washington telling about the facts of the situation, which I did. It was Saturday night in Washington and I gather it caused quite a commotion

Anyway, then the situation grew worse and worse. The North Koreans were highly prepared against our unprepared couple of divisions up there on the front facing them where they were crossing the line. And so our forces were forced back. Mind you, this is only 50 miles north of us. So we didn't have much time, we had to get to business.

We called in our evacuation committee. We had a good one. We met about once a month. Some people expected some trouble. We set that in motion and by that afternoon we had

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decided to ship out about 600 women and children on a merchant ship that was at the port, which was only about 25 miles to the southwest of us. The captain agreed to take our people and put them off in Japan. So that was the first order of business.

And that being done, we had to assess the situation continuously, and it was getting worse all the time. We had burned our papers on Monday morning, 24 hours after things started, and got the mission in position to be evacuated. And when the situation worsened even more, we got in touch with General MacArthur's headquarters and asked for aerial help. He had the aircraft. And by Monday evening we were beginning to evacuate 2,000 people—women, children, dependents.

Q: You had that many people there?

DRUMRIGHT: All Americans and some foreigners. We evacuated the United Nations Commission that was there working on a solution to that problem, and some of the diplomats and their families, and anyone who seemed to qualify for immediate evacuation.

Q: Did you evacuate other nationals, as well?

DRUMRIGHT: Some we did. A lot of credit is due to the MacArthur organization for getting the planes over there, and also for sending over some planes to protect those planes because the North Korean Air Force was active. And that pretty well took up much of our time.

We were in touch, I think, with President Rhee once or twice. But in the long run, President Rhee evacuated by train early Tuesday morning. Things started on Sunday, so early Tuesday morning he and his entourage evacuated south on a train, which was good enough, but they didn't tell us. We had to find out that they had left. So by Tuesday morning the evacuation was well in hand and it was completed by early Tuesday afternoon with the rest of us, Ambassador Muccio and myself, and we had PAO Stewart, and Harold

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Noble, who wrote a book about this, and Don McDonald, and one or two others, one or two clerical help.

I was instructed by Ambassador Muccio to proceed south to make contact with President Rhee so I took Stewart and McDonald, Prendergast, another secretary, we went south and we did locate President Rhee in a town about a hundred miles south. So I went over to see Rhee immediately and found him to be extraordinarily bitter about the invasion, the evacuation, and, what he saw as a lack of help by the US in this critical juncture. We didn't know what was going on in Washington.

Meantime, Ambassador Muccio had stayed with the US advisors in the south end of Seoul, near the river, where they could evacuate. They had their headquarters there. But they had to evacuate Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning and went about 30 miles south where they set up headquarters.

Q: The Reds, Mr. Ambassador, did they capture Seoul shortly thereafter?

DRUMRIGHT: They began moving in on Seoul on Tuesday afternoon. I left Tuesday afternoon and I could hear the bombardment by that time. They came in Tuesday night.

Q: How long did Seoul and Kimpo Airport, et cetera, how long were they in the hands of the Reds?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, they were in their hands until after the landing made by MacArthur. That was October the 20th. He landed and cut the North Koreans off. Their main line of communications came through this whole area and his objective was to cut that and recapture Seoul. So his landing put us back there about the 20th.

I went up there myself while there was still desultory fighting around some of the streets and checked in at the embassy. I found that it was still there but a hole had been blown in one end of it by our own Navy aviators. But, otherwise, it was in good shape. I found

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our residences okay, basically. I moved into the ambassador's residence for a day or two. We, eventually, moved back. We were back in there by November 1. We had set up shop again. President Rhee had come back and was in his quarters.

Q: So you didn't find everything in a shambles then?

DRUMRIGHT: No. It wasn't in a shambles. There was some fighting when MacArthur retook Seoul and there was some destruction, but not anything very great. And so we came back. We had the difficulty then of deciding, well, would MacArthur go into North Korea across the 38th parallel. Well, that was decided finally. Yes, we would. And, you know, that took some operating in Washington to get that signal to go ahead. We were strong for it, of course. And MacArthur was. He wanted to clean up.

And the signal was given and he had pretty well cleaned up well into North Korea when the Chinese Communists came into it with overwhelming forces. And then we had that crisis. They forced us back slowly. We pretty much pulled out, actually, in a very orderly way and with some heavy fighting in Northeast Korea.

In the meantime, the commander of our forces, General Walker, was killed in a jeep accident and Ridgway took over. He was a very fine general. Both of them had been, in fact. And I recall Ridgway calling Ambassador Muccio and me to his temporary headquarters up north of Seoul to tell us they were going to withdraw through Seoul father south before putting up a firm defense. He wanted us to know so we could make our preparations. So we had a leisurely evacuation that time. And the Korean people of Seoul who had no chance, except for a very few, to evacuate on the first invasion, had plenty of time this time. Most of them left Seoul, left it an empty shell, toward the latter part of December.

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Q: I believe that eventually, then, to wrap this up a little bit, I believe that MacArthur was eventually ousted as Commander-in-Chief of UN Forces there. How did you feel about MacArthur being ousted? Do you think that was a logical thing to do at that time?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, that came a little later. I would just say that MacArthur made, basically, an orderly withdrawal and then a defense was put up about 50 miles south of Seoul. And then we commenced to set up offensive activities. By the time I was ordered out of Korea, which was in April, we were on the move North again, and we reoccupied Seoul sometime in April. In other words, the Chinese communists were not able to support their invasion of South Korea. It was too much for them. And with some strong action in specific areas, we were able to drive them back up beyond the 38th parallel.

And then the question came of what to do. When it became apparent that the Chinese were in, well, not quite a disorderly retreat, but certainly not any desirable one, the question came whether we should accept what was a Russian offer to establish an armistice or to go on with the war. Our feeling in the embassy, at least mine was, was that we should go ahead and wrap this thing up and get them completely out of Korea and unify that country. But President Truman and his advisors, Secretary of State Acheson, they had done the right thing in coming into the war back in previous years, sending forces in to stop the North Koreans and to move into North Korea, but they decided they didn't want to prolong this thing further so they opted to meet with the Chinese and North Koreans and set up an armistice.

We, the people out there, and MacArthur at the head, wanted to go forward and go ahead and clean the thing up. My opinion is that we could have done it in six months. But that wasn't Washington's view and we had to step to their tune.

Q: I remember that time very well.

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DRUMRIGHT: So MacArthur met with Truman on Wake Island. Ambassador Muccio went there to participate. And the upshot was they would have an armistice and try to settle the thing peacefully. And the end result of all that was that we continue to this day to have an armistice in Korea and a divided Korea, and with the potential of another war at some time.

Q: Exactly.

DRUMRIGHT: So much so that we continue to keep a division of troops in Korea at this time. And we have strongly built up the South Korean military. It's a very strong organization today.

Q: Great.

DRUMRIGHT: So the North Koreans would have to think two, or three times before launching an invasion. That's pretty much the Korea story. I left in April.

Q: What brought about your assignment to New Delhi and Bombay, India? Can you tell us about that?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, they said I had been there about three years. They wanted my views back in Washington. So I was given a ride back with John Foster Dulles, who was out there on special mission in Japan.

DRUMRIGHT: So I got a ride on his aircraft back to Washington. And I think they had hoped there that I would support this armistice, but I never did. I was against it and I said so. That's one of my failings in the Foreign Service, I guess. And I was then shunted off to India.

I had said I would like to go to Singapore as consul general, but they had already assigned another officer to that post. So they said Loy Henderson would be interested in having you in New Delhi, so I went. But I was there less than two months when Loy left. Chester

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Bowles came to be ambassador and we never did get along too well. He always wanted to run the shop strictly his own way, and he brought out his own people, and so on. But I stayed with him over a year when one day the post in Bombay came open. I went to see him and said, "I would like that post, if you would like to recommend my going there." And he said he would.

So I went to Bombay and spent less than a year as consul general, which I enjoyed. I found Bombay very agreeable after Delhi, where the Indian people, the officials, were not all that friendly towards us.

Q: Similar to today, I believe.

DRUMRIGHT: It's still that way. It's pretty much the same. So that's the Indian saga. I was then called back to be deputy assistant under Walter Roberts. I came back and went in there in, I guess, October. And we began to have trouble with the Chinese communists. They were threatening Taiwan and the offshore islands. In the meantime, we were having meetings with them in Warsaw. We had an envoy, Alex Johnson, was over there talking for us. I had succeeded Alex Johnson in Washington and he had gone to Czechoslovakia as ambassador. And then they sent him to do this talking in Warsaw. I never was very much in favor of that. We kept Taiwan informed, in a way, of what was being done there, but it wasn't anything substantial anyhow. Nothing much came of it. And we established a treaty with Taiwan in 1954.

But, by that time, let's see, the Indochina problem sort of intruded while I was there. And I recall being involved in the move of several hundred thousand Vietnamese from North Vietnam to South Vietnam by our Navy. They did a wonderful job of it. We got that through. This was largely people who were not simpatico with the North Vietnamese. And we also helped the French a bit from time to time. We helped them get some military equipment in on an emergency basis. But we did not agree to help them when they were being defeated at Dien Bien Phu. We pulled on that.

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We had a little scrap with the Chinese over the prisoners of war in Korea. They insisted on getting their people back.

To go back to Washington, my assignment in the State Department was on the China desk. We began to have increasing tensions with the Chinese. And in those, I usually took a fairly strong line, stronger than some of my superiors liked.

So after about a year in Washington I was reassigned to Hong Kong as consul general. My service extended to over three years. Our main jobs there were to report, as best we could, on Communist China. And we were able in that time to report to Washington on some of the main things that were occurring there, such as the famine that was coming up, and some of Mao's moves, which later proved to be disastrous.

Other than that, the main thing that occurred in Hong Kong was the development of a plan to stop the fake emigration that had been going on there for many years. That is to say, Chinese had established ways, and means, and schools to prompt potential emigrants in ways of getting into the United States. We set up a program of investigators. In fact, at the end, we had about 30 who were investigating these cases that were coming to us. And our investigations in the long run showed a great many of them were fakes. We were rather proud of that program there, which was based on a report by one of my vice consuls, Leo Mosher, who, I think, is in Washington today.

After Hong Kong, much to my delight, I was assigned to Taiwan, where I knew the Chinese officials from Chiang Kai-shek on down, and where I felt there was some opportunity for advancement of Chinese aims. I was glad to go there. My wife and I arrived there in March of 1958, following Ambassador Carl Rankin who had been there some six or seven years. He had done a fine job of establishing the mission there at a time when it seemed, just before the Korean War, that we were going to abandon Taiwan completely. But as a result of the Korean War starting, everything changed and we decided that Taiwan was a very important piece of property as far as our defenses of the area were

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concerned. And so we resumed a relationship that had been in arrears since the late 1940's in China.

To relate one or two important things that took place, within six months of my arrival we had the offshore island of Quemoy incident, which pitted the Chinese and us against the Mainland Chinese. They opened up a heavy bombardment of Quemoy in September of 1958. And that went on continuously for over two weeks. In that case, I am glad to say that President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles presented a very firm front. We assisted the Chinese as we could, but they did most of the defending there and with the result that, after four to six weeks, the Chinese communists pulled back and stopped their bombardment.

Q: Tell me, sir, about Quemoy, why was this energetic defense of Quemoy undertaken? My recollection is that Quemoy is a small island very near the Chinese coast, maybe four or five miles away. Whereas, the Formosa Strait there is about what, 40 miles wide?

DRUMRIGHT: A hundred.

Q: A hundred miles wide.

DRUMRIGHT: Well, it's mainly symbolic. They held onto all the territory that they could. In fact, when they retreated in late 1949 they defeated a Chinese attempt at that time to try to take Quemoy. That isn't a well-known event but it happened. And they turned back the Chinese communists. It was largely symbolic. And also it seemed to them a harbinger of, perhaps, a return sometime to the Mainland. So it was something they wanted to hang onto. And they did. And they still have it today.

I recall after that that President Eisenhower made a visit. He was very warmly received in Taiwan, probably one of the warmest receptions he ever received anywhere. Also, Secretary of State Dulles came on two or three occasions. He was very active and instrumental in protecting Taiwan. And, in fact, he had laid the plan, along with the

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Chinese foreign minister, for the defense treaty that we established in, I believe, December of 1954.

Other than that, I was proud of our military advisory group that was doing a good job of helping to train Chinese forces for defense of Taiwan, and also our economic group, under Wes Haraldson, that helped a great deal in establishing the base for the Taiwan we know today. That started during those years, about 1960, with the Chinese establishing programs or inviting foreign investors into Taiwan, establishing laws and regulations to encourage them to come, and all that sort of thing. Now we helped them, but I think on the whole, most of the credit goes to China itself and the Chinese for what they did at that time and what they're still doing today.

Q: So I presume that the US Government and the embassy did lend every support feasible to economic progress in Taiwan?

DRUMRIGHT: We had a program there of about \$100 million of economic aid and a fairly similar sum for military aid during the four years I was there, and it began to show up very clearly before we left. We left in March of 1962 on orders from President Kennedy. I think he felt I was much too supportive of the Chinese there. And there seemed to be an apprehension in Washington that Taiwan would take some step to invade the Mainland, which I always decried as nonsense and so forth. I went back and found I had no further job, so I retired. And that's the end of it.

Q: I see. Well, now a little reflection there. As one of the four tigers of East Asia, as they call Formosa today, with trade surpluses with the United States every year, how do you see Taiwan's future economic development and activities?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, they started out agriculturally and that program was remarkably successful. But within a few years of the start, let's say by 1970, they had turned to an industrial society. Now this was an industrial society founded on cheap labor, along with the rest of it. And that had gone on until about the last two or three years when the

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Chinese have found that they've got to go high-tech. In other words, they don't have the surplus of labor they had when I was there or for several years thereafter—cheap labor, good, intelligent, hard working labor.

So they have now decided, like Japan, they've got to go high tech. And they're following in the footsteps of Japan in developing a high tech type of industry and economics. And they're probably going to be successful at it and continue their high trade margins and that sort of thing.

Q: I'm very glad to have your assessment of that, Mr. Ambassador. For the benefit of young research scholars of international and diplomatic history, can you give us your view of the Foreign Service as a career? Can you tell me a little bit about your viewpoints on that?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I look back upon my career as having been a most adventurous and interesting one. And I have no regrets whatsoever for having pursued the course I took. I had lots of opportunities in the Service. I was basically well treated throughout. I was given promotions, I think, on the basis of my performance; I hope so. I feel that I made some contribution to the welfare of the United States by my service in some of these countries. And so I'm very happy that I took the course I did. As for people now, I am not very close to the State Department. I know almost no one in it anymore. I have not set foot in it for over ten years.

I think the Foreign Service has a future for those who have an interest in our foreign relations, those who wish to work hard, those who wish to prepare themselves in the fields of the Foreign Service, including languages, and who are willing to take the knocks, as well as the good parts, of being abroad. Yes, but if you want to get to the top, you've got to work hard and do what you're told to do. That's about it.

Q: Many thanks, Mr. Ambassador, for a very interesting and sharp account of your experiences in China and other Far East areas. You rose to the top of the ranks in your

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favorite profession and are certainly indicative of a career that was well-founded and of value to your government.

DRUMRIGHT: Thank you.

Q: Thank you. This is signing off here on December 5, 1988, in Poway, California.

End of interview